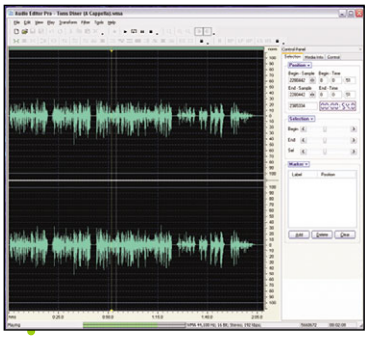
by Kevin Savetz

MightSoft Audio Editor Pro 1.40



Audio Editor Pro 1.40
$39.95
MightSoft
www.mightsoft.com

A good sound editor can be a truly useful and fun addition to your software toolbox. You can use it to trim the annoying introduction from an otherwise-great MP3 song, create your own Windows error sounds, or splice together a unique answering machine message. For those tasks and countless others, Audio Editor Pro does an admirable job.

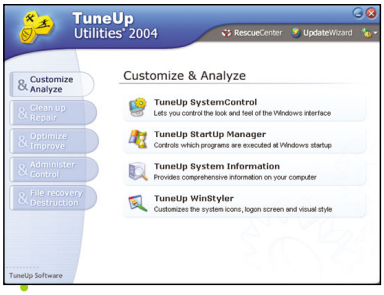
The heart of the app is its waveform editor, which presents a visual representation of your sound file. If you've used any sort of waveform editor before, you'll be able to jump headlong into AEP. By selecting a portion of the audio, you can manipulate it in various ways. The Transform menu includes various tweaks, including Reverb, Fade, Flanger, and Stretch. The Filters menu provides Low and High Pass, Low and High Shelf, Ban Pass, and Notch filters.

A Spectral view lets you see the tonal range of your samples. When capturing samples from a mic or line-input source, you can have the app automatically apply filters to remove tape hiss or other spurious noise. I do have a few quibbles, however. You can't perform most functions, even something as simple as zooming in on a selection, while the program is playing back the audio. Also, expanding a selection to an area outside the current view could be easier, as you can't click and drag to scroll the view.

AEP works with MP3, WAV, WMA, Ogg Vorbis, plus other audio formats. Although it can open and save those formats directly, the package includes a simple app for converting between audio file formats, including batch conversions. There's also a basic CD ripper, but it didn't work well, failing to recognize a FireWire optical drive. The CDDB feature also didn't work for me.

Despite a few hiccups, AEP is a worthy sound editor. It doesn't demand a fast PC. A 400MHz CPU will get the job done, and you can "sample" the program for 15 days before buying it. ▲

TuneUp Software TuneUp Utilities 2004



TuneUp Utilities 2004
$39.99 ($24.99 upgrade)
TuneUp Software
www.tune-up.com

Keeping Microsoft Windows happily running isn't fun for anyone. We may be power users, but we aren't masochists. Dealing with Registry errors and other maintenance issues are chores no one likes. TuneUp Utilities 2004 can take some of the pain away, plus it provides some cool Windows customizations.

Some of the program's features parallel Norton SystemWorks'. For example, TuneUp will search for invalid Registry entries, search for missing files your applications need, and remove space-eating temporary files. A 1-Click Maintenance tool will quickly run through the tune-up regimen. The tool indicates how many problems it finds, but it doesn't provide specifics about what those issues are. You'll have to run each utility by hand for that information.

Several features mirror functions built into Windows. For example, when memory gets tight, the memory optimizer frees RAM by moving unneeded programs to the paging file. It's difficult to say if it does a better job than Windows' default paging system, however. There's also a Registry editor and process manager, both similar to those included in Windows, although with some additional functions.

The app also includes an Uninstall Manager that removes apps you no longer need; a Disk-Cleaner that removes backup, log, Internet cache, and temporary files; an Undelete utility that restores files; and Shredder, a DoD-compliant tool for securely deleting files, making sure other users can't recover your deleted secrets.

A WinStyler feature provides clever functions for customizing the Windows interface. You can use it to modify Windows' visual style; change the image on the Windows login screen; and replace the default My Computer, Recycle Bin, and other icons with graphics of your choice.

TuneUp Utilities was stable and speedy in my tests, repairing Registry problems more quickly than Norton SystemWorks. It is lacking as a complete system tune-up solution, however, failing to include file and disk-repair functions. In addition, it doesn't make a strong case for why some of its tools are better than Windows' built-in functions. ▲

CPU Ranking: 0 = Absolutely Worthless 2.5 = Absolutely Average 5 = Absolutely Perfect